

THE BIG MUDDY

The River of the Lewis and Clark expedition

PART 1: SELECTED READINGS FROM THE CORPS OF DISCOVERY JOURNALS

PART 2: THE TRANSITION FROM FRONTIER TIMES TO THE MODERN WORLD



GRADE LEVEL:

Upper Elementary/Middle School

SUBJECT AREA:

Missouri and American History, Social Studies, Geography and Environmental Science

DURATION:

Preparation time: Minimal

Part 1: Background and selected readings: One 50-minute class session

Part 2: Discussion on changes in Missouri River watershed: One 50-minute class session

SETTING: Classroom

CONCEPTS/ KEY WORDS:

- History of the Lewis and Clark Expedition
- Human Population Increases
- The Louisiana Purchase
- American Indians
- Biological Diversity
- Missouri State History
- Western Expansion

SUMMARY

Students will explore the history of the Lewis and Clark expedition from the perspective of the lower Missouri River watershed. The students will review selected readings from the journals of the Corps of Discovery. The activity is designed to help students explore the historical context of the Missouri River and the changes that have occurred in the last 200 years.

OBJECTIVES

THE STUDENT WILL:

PART 1:

- ✓ Review the history of the Lewis and Clark expedition
- ✓ Review selected readings from the journals of the Corps of Discovery

PART 2:

- ✓ Review Missouri's history concerning American Indian populations, settlement patterns and natural history
- ✓ Revisit the selected readings from the journals of Lewis and Clark discussed in Part 1
- ✓ Discuss the changes that have occurred since the Lewis and Clark expedition in regards to human population, biological diversity and American Indian culture

Extension

- ✓ Discuss the possible effects to the development of the United States if the Louisiana Purchase had never occurred

BACKGROUND

“The object of your mission is to explore the Missouri river, & such principal stream of it, as, by it’s course & communication with the waters of the Pacific Ocean, may offer the most direct & practicable water communication across this continent, for the purposes of commerce.”

-President Thomas Jefferson’s written instructions to Meriwether Lewis

With these words, Thomas Jefferson set in motion what was to become perhaps the greatest exploration in the history of North America. For many years Jefferson had envisioned a trade route across the America to the Pacific Ocean. He selected Meriwether Lewis to lead an expedition exploring this possibility. Jefferson appointed him as his personal secretary and began grooming him for this mission. For three years Lewis and Jefferson spent evenings discussing and planning the logistics and goals of an expedition. Those goals were multi-faceted, with both scientific and economic intentions. While

Jefferson certainly wanted to open a trade route to the west and expand the territory of the United States, he also was keenly interested in expanding the scientific understanding of the flora and fauna of this little explored region.

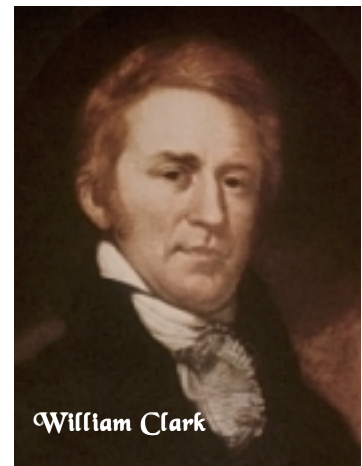
Lewis was also instructed to try to establish positive relationships with the American Indians populating the region.

“The commerce which may be carried on with the people inhabiting the line you will pursue, renders a knolege of those people important”

- President Thomas Jefferson’s written instructions to Meriwether Lewis

The mission gained a new emphasis with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. The United States paid France \$15 million for the lands stretching from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains and has been described as the greatest real estate deal in history, more than doubling the area of the United States. The Lewis and Clark expedition would pass right through the heart of this newly acquired region.

Lewis selected his former military leader William



Clark as his co-command. Together they went about a year of preparations involving equipment and crew selections. The Corps of Discovery consisted of nine young men from Kentucky, 14 soldiers of the United States Army, two French boatmen, a woodsman and interpreter and a Captain Clark’s slave, York. The expedition would later be joined by the American Indian woman, *Sacagawea*, along with her husband and infant son. The expedition started up the Missouri River in May

1804 aboard a large keelboat (55 feet long) and two pirogues (open boats). They would not return until two years later in September 1806.

While Lewis and Clark did not uncover the easy river route to the Pacific Ocean that Jefferson had sought, they successfully documented territory few Europeans had previously visited. Their reports of lands rich and abundant with game created an excitement in the American people that helped to fuel the western expansion that followed.

The expedition's reports concerning the ecosystems and the native people encountered are still relevant. The journals of Lewis and Clark offer a unique perspective on the changes that have occurred to the American landscape over the last 200 years.

MATERIALS

PROVIDED:

Part 1
Selected readings from the Lewis and Clark journal.

Part 2
Associated background information sheets.

PROCEDURE

WARM UP

Set the stage by asking the students the following questions:

- *What was life like for humans (both American Indians, immigrants and slaves) living in the lower Missouri River watershed in the 1800s?*

(An area now represented by parts of Kansas, Iowa and the central portion of the state of Missouri)

- *What plants and animals were present in the Missouri in the 1800s?*
- *By what means and routes did immigrants travel west?*

A brief list of responses can be generated on the board. These questions can be revisited at the end of the activity, allowing the students to modify or expand their initial efforts.

Review with the students the history of the Lewis and Clark expedition as provided in the background section of this lesson.

PART 1

SELECTED READINGS FROM THE CORPS OF DISCOVERY JOURNALS

Excerpts from the journals of the Lewis and Clark expedition are provided. The journal entries represent specific locations as the Corps of Discovery progressed up the Missouri River. Photocopies can be provided to the students or each entry can be read aloud in class.

Note: The instructor may want to discuss with the students the lack of defined rules for spelling, present at the time the journals were written.

It may be useful to display a map of Missouri to assist the students in envisioning the Corps of Discovery location during each of the selected journal entries.

MODIFICATIONS

Assign the students a role on the expedition (such as a cook, boatman, black servant, hunter, river navigator, military officer, naturalist, general hand, night watchman, scout, interpreter, map maker, preparer of specimens, gun smith, etc). Next, ask the students to create their own journal entry as they

imagine it may have occurred had they participated in the Corps of Discovery journey.

PART 2

THE TRANSITION FROM FRONTIER TIMES TO THE MODERN WORLD

Present the following focus areas to the class (see specific background sheets attached).

The class can also be divided into groups and each group assigned one of the background sheets.

- AMERICAN INDIANS IN MISSOURI
- SETTLEMENT OF MISSOURI
- NATURAL HISTORY OF MISSOURI

Once the information presented in each of the specific background information sheets has been reviewed, the class should revisit the selected readings of the Lewis and Clark journals provided in part 1.

The students should determine the observations made by the Corps of Discovery that are relevant to each of the assigned focus topics.

Have the students or groups present or discuss the relevant observations made by the Corps of Discovery and then consider the changes that have occurred in Missouri over the last 200 years.

WHAT IF LEWIS AND CLARK TRAVELED UP THE MISSOURI RIVER TODAY?

Assign the students an imaginary role on a modern Corps of Discovery expedition to explore the modern Missouri River and its inhabitants. Some potential expedition roles are suggested below:

- ✓ Cook
- ✓ Mechanic
- ✓ River Navigator
- ✓ Computer Map Maker
- ✓ General Hand
- ✓ Supply Clerk
- ✓ Military Officer
- ✓ Night Watchman
- ✓ Wildlife Biologist
- ✓ Advance Scout
- ✓ Boat Operator
- ✓ Cultural Interpreter
- ✓ Historic Site Specialist
- ✓ Aquatic Biologist
- ✓ Specimen Preparer

The students may be able to think of additional roles that would be important on a modern expedition to explore the Missouri River.

Next, have the students create a few days worth of journal entries as they

imagine would occur if they were to participate on a modern day Corps of Discovery journey.

The students may want to research what would be encountered in the modern Missouri River region in terms of fish and game species, historic places, river-based cities and towns, recreational activities, along with other modern day cultural use of the Missouri River region.

EXTENSIONS

Discuss the effects on the development of the United States that would have occurred if the Louisiana territories had remained in the ownership of France.

USEFUL PUBLICATIONS



The following publications are available through the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

- ❑ *The Terrestrial Natural Communities of Missouri*
- ❑ *Indians and Archaeology of Missouri*
- ❑ *Exploring Missouri's Legacy- State Parks and Historic Sites*
- ❑ *Geologic Wonders and Curiosities of Missouri*
- ❑ *Missouri Landscapes: A Tour Through Time*